



Coordinating Law Day Job Shadowing for Nebraska Fifth Graders

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For the sixth year, Nebraska's County and District Court judges, staff, and lawyers met with local fifth graders to encourage them to work hard and stay in school. They also provided an up-close look at their own jobs and talked with the students about the educational requirements and personal traits needed to become a judge or a lawyer. The program is another joint effort between the Supreme Court and the Nebraska State Bar Foundation.

New to Job Shadowing this year was Judge Curtis

Maschman, who with Pawnee County Clerk Magistrate LaRita Weber, hosted not one but three separate groups of fifth graders on Arbor Day, April 25. Judge



Students demonstrate self-taught questioning techniques during a mock trial for their job shadow visit at the Buffalo County Courthouse.



Garden County students give their lunch-in-the-courtroom activity an enthusiastic review during their job shadow lesson on anti-bullying techniques and resources.

Maschman saw the advantage of bringing students from Pawnee City, Humboldt Table Rock, Steinauer, and Lewiston schools to the courthouse in Pawnee City on



Judge Curt Maschman (far left) hosts area students on Arbor Day while celebrating his 15th anniversary on the bench.



LaRita Weber gives students an up-close look at the court's docket book during her portion of the job shadow program.

a day when the building was closed to the public but open for an elementary school adventure. The occasion also commemorated the 15th anniversary of Judge Maschman's being sworn in as a member of the Nebraska judiciary.

Covering the event for the *Pawnee Republican*, Editor Carol A. Sisco reported that the students followed a

scenario of a fictional "fender bender" from the sheriff's investigation through the appearance of the defendant in court before the judge and jury. Some of the students filled the roles of jurors in the proceeding before

Judge Maschman. In evaluating her students' experience, Lewiston teacher Jean Kwiatkowski commented: "Allowing the kids to sit as jurors and at the other table really drew the students into the learning mode...We would love to return next year."

In her second year as a Job Shadowing coordinator and host, Judge Donna Taylor scheduled activities in two of the communities she serves in northeast Nebraska. On April 29, she hosted fifth graders from Elgin's St. Boniface Elementary School and from Orchard Public Schools at the courthouse in Neligh. On May 1, fifth graders from Stanton Public Schools and St. John's Lutheran School joined

Judge Taylor at the courthouse in Stanton.

In both communities, job shadowers imitated prosecution and defense attorneys, witnesses, jurors, and the judge as they participated in the mock trial, *State v. Bean*. The case, based on the children's story of Jack and the Beanstalk, was developed by the Constitutional Rights Foundation Chicago. Stanton teacher Tom King wrote: "We enjoyed the experience tremendously and would love to do it again."

In Columbus, veteran Job Shadowing host Judge Frank Skorupa and coordinator Clerk Magistrate Darla Schiefelbein led students from Columbus Christian School through a theft case. Students acted the parts of various courtroom staff and at the conclusion of the trial, after the defendant was found guilty, he was "taken to jail." With the entire class in tow, the Jail Administrator conducted a tour of the old jail facility. Schiefelbein comments that the students "always love acting out a case and seeing the old jail facility." Prior to the mock trial, Schiefelbein provided students with background information on Law Day and the court system.

Other Job Shadowing communities where fifth graders participated in mock trials were Winnebago and Oshkosh. In its second year in the program, the Winnebago Tribal Court hosted students from St. Augustine Mission School. Darrell Fierro, Youth Intervention Specialist, coordinated a mock trial based on the story of Goldilocks and the Three Bears. Teacher Julie Humbert reflects: "The students have looked forward to this

all year! It's a great way for them to see the process as well as possible career possibilities."

Following one of several suggested Job Shadowing activities provided by the Bar Foundation, Garden County District Court Clerk Teresa McKeeman, offered a mock trial that featured a scenario about bullying. This option was suggested, as the Nebraska Legislature has passed a law requiring all schools districts to adopt by July 1, 2009, anti-bullying policies and to instruct students about the subject. The Garden County Attorney's office adapted the mock trial with permission from its creator, the Plymouth County District Attorney's Office in Brockton, Massachusetts. Judge Kristine Cecava and Judge Randin Roland assisted the student judges in their roles in presiding over the case.

Kimball County Clerk Magistrate Angela Haun, with assistance from Judge Roland, also addressed the topic of bullying. State Patrol officers and local law enforcement offered suggestions for spotting bullying behavior and helping or getting help for victims of bullies. They also talked with the students about underage drinking and drugs. But it was Bruno, Badge Number 343K, who stole the show. Bruno is the drug dog handled by Trooper Russ Lewis who demonstrated the drug sniffing talents of the canine. Students also watched sheriff's dispatchers work a mock accident and observed officers' operation of emergency vehicles and "cool cars."

Haun indicates that the students come to Job Shadowing with many questions, which are interesting and

well thought out. "We always run out of time. The Kimball 5th graders are always easy to talk to...and so willing to participate in the program. It is a delight to have them and we look forward to it every year."

Sherman County Clerk Magistrate Janelle Mostek partnered with County Attorney Mark Eureka where they stressed the importance of getting a good education as a foundation for law-related jobs. The Sheriff, who addressed the matter of bullying with Loup City Middle School students, elicited this response from a fifth grader: "I was surprised when the sheriff said we could let him know if someone was really bullying us."

Two Job Shadowing coordinators on board since the inception of the program are Sharon Mauler, Buffalo County District Court Clerk and Midge Clark, Holt County Clerk Magistrate. Both coordinators have worked closely with local judges to plan activities for the students and have involved them in interactive exchanges with the students, explaining the court system and what their jobs as judges entail.



Judge Donna Taylor (front standing right) discusses the responsibilities of jury members with her student panel.



Magistrate Janelle Mostek (standing left) presents information on the Judicial Branch to students visiting the courtroom in Loup City.

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In Buffalo County, Judge John Icenogle, Judge William Wright, Judge Gerald Jorgensen, and Judge Graten Beavers entered into a 30-minute dialogue with students from Kearney Public School and Pleasanton Public School.

Judge Alan Brodbeck annually talks in O'Neill with St. Mary's students about the Law Day theme as well as his job. Teacher Mary Novak reports, "It was great having the judge talk to us in the courtroom." At the conclusion of the Judge's presentation, local attorneys divide the students into small groups and take them to their offices where they learn more about the job of representing clients in court.

"The 5th graders of GCE would like to thank the courthouse and all of the officers, lawyers, judges, etc. that had anything to do with setting up and helping with Law Day."

We learned so much about the process of law and going to court.

Thanks for the great, purple t-shirts, the pizza, the pop and the Great day! We had the BEST TIME!!!"

. . . Thank you note from job shadow students printed in the Garden County News along with a story of the mock trial.

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County Court Clerk Magistrates and District Court Clerks have supported Law Day Job Shadowing by serving as dedicated local coordinators for the job shadowing activities in more than 10 communities around the state each year since 2003. The Supreme Court thanks these professionals for their commitment to teaching tomorrow's leaders about the Third Branch of government and the careers dedicated to justice.



Photos

Top: Jodi Rezabek (right) escorts 5th graders on a tour of the clerk's office in Wilber.

Middle: 'Defendant' from Columbus Christian is taken to jail after being found guilty in his mock trial.

Bottom: O'Neill's St. Mary's 5th grade class reviews the "Citizen's Guide to Nebraska Courts" as part of their learning experience.